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CHAPTER 3:

UNDERSTANDING HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN BALTIMORE

Introductory paragraph to be added in future draft (to expand on quality of life issues)

THE BENEFITS OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The mission of the Commission for Historical & Architectural Preservation (CHAP) is “to enhance and promote the culture and economy of Baltimore through the preservation of buildings, structures, sites and neighborhoods, that have aesthetic, historic and architectural value.” By identifying and protecting historic neighborhoods and landmarks, CHAP promotes the unique history and culture of Baltimore for the benefit of its citizens, visitors, and investors.

The benefits of preservation in Baltimore translate into dollar-and-cents through tax incentives and grants for preservation work, and through direct reinvestment in the local economy. Preservation does not focus solely on the past. Preservation also positively impacts the future of Baltimore; by ensuring that its citizens are good stewards of the city and its heritage, we are preserving the finest attributes of the community for the next generation.

PRESERVATION BENEFITS THE CULTURE OF BALTIMORE...

The culture of Baltimore is enhanced by the promotion of distinctive places for residents and visitors to live, work, and play. CHAP identifies and protects Baltimore’s irreplaceable buildings and communities through designation of historic neighborhoods and individual landmark buildings. Through this process, the physical history of Baltimore is saved, protected, and most importantly, celebrated.

Residents live and work in the same neighborhoods where nineteenth-century immigrants became American citizens. Visitors can explore Baltimore’s ship-building history and walk the docks in the footsteps of Frederick Douglass. Small business owners can set up shop in distinctive buildings that reflect the architectural styles of a former century. Everyone can enjoy the views of Fort McHenry, of Battle Monument, and the Shot Tower, which declare that you are in Baltimore, the Monument City.

PRESERVATION BENEFITS THE ECONOMY OF BALTIMORE...

The economy of Baltimore benefits from preservation in several ways. Individual property owners and investors benefit from tax incentives for preservation work. Local communities benefit from designation as a historic district. The local economy as a whole benefits through the development of strong communities, the creation of local jobs, the promotion of heritage tourism, and through commercial and residential investment.

Benefits for the Individual

Baltimore offers some of the most significant economic incentives in the nation for undertaking preservation work. They are available to both individual property owners and developers. For property owners, there are city, state, federal, and private programs available to offset the cost of rehabilitation:

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- *Baltimore City Property Tax Credit for Historic Restorations and Rehabilitations* applies to qualifying work on designated historic buildings. Available to owners of both residential and income-producing properties, the city program provides a ten-year property tax credit for substantial rehabilitation projects, granted on the increased assessment resulting from such improvements. Over 1,200 projects have been approved and certified through 2007.
- *Maryland State Heritage Preservation Tax Credit Program* provides owners of residential and income-producing properties with Maryland income tax credits equal to 20% of the qualified capital costs expended in the rehabilitation of a “certified heritage structure.”
- The *Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program* is available for rehabilitation work exclusively on Income-Producing Properties, which includes rental residential buildings. The program provides a federal income tax credit equal to 20% of the qualified rehabilitation expenditures.
- *Historic Preservation Easements*, contracted through private trusts, can reduce federal income taxes for property owners of eligible historic properties. Under the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentive Program, Internal Revenue Code Section 170(h), property owners can formally agree to maintain and preserve forever the architecturally significant features of their properties’ exterior in order to be eligible for a reduction in their federal income taxes.

Benefits for the Local Community

Beyond the individual, preservation provides benefits for the local community as a whole. Through designation with CHAP, property owners in a historic neighborhood are able to identify and protect the individual character, quality building stock, and streetscape characteristics that are unique to their community. The many collective benefits include:

- Eligibility for rehabilitation tax incentives;
- Increased property values, with no limits on property use or restriction on sales. Throughout Maryland, property values in historic districts have proven to appreciate at a faster rate than the surrounding community (Rypkema 1999: 3);
- Protection from incompatible and inappropriate exterior alterations and changes;
- Expert technical assistance through the building permit review process;
- Protection from demolition and inappropriate development;
- A strong sense of community between neighbors who value the distinctive character of their neighborhood - designation is not conferred without the consent of a majority of property owners; and
- A strong, stabilized community that can promote further investment for small businesses and residential rehabilitation

Benefits for the Local Economy

Preservation can play a direct role in boosting job creation and investment in the local economy. By preserving the unique character and history of Baltimore, the city can better sustain highly-skilled local jobs, boost economic development, and attract quality visitors.

As community revitalization gets underway, the local economy responds by creating jobs and attracting investment. The rehabilitation of historic buildings is a highly-skilled, labor intensive process. It requires that local contractors maintain trained and experienced crews. Local suppliers are needed for quality and often custom materials. Rehabilitation projects eligible for historic federal tax credits *alone* created 8,197 construction jobs in Maryland from 1978-1998 (Rypkema 1999: 1).

The commitment to the neighborhood can be seen in the renovated buildings as porches are painted, new roofs are installed, and masonry is pointed. Stabilized neighborhoods create healthy, viable business

Baltimore City Design Guidelines for Historic Resources

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districts that attract further investment. Existing main streets and historic commercial corridors are ideal places for small businesses. They provide diversity of space and rent levels not found in other areas of the city. The National Trust for Historic Preservation already supports Main Street programs throughout Baltimore, which are tailored to revitalize and promote investment in commercial historic districts. The National Trust Main Street program averages \$40.35 reinvestment dollars for every \$1 spent (Mason 2005, 10).

By identifying, protecting, and revitalizing historic resources, preservation supports Baltimore as a destination for heritage tourism. Historically significant areas appropriate for public attention are effectively targeted for economic development. Services are provided in historic areas for tourists. It has been found that visitors to historic resources stay longer and spend more money than other visitors (Rypkema 1999: 6). Baltimore has already discovered the benefits of heritage tourism by proposing the Baltimore National Heritage Area with city-wide links and interpretive trails.

PRESERVATION BENEFITS THE FUTURE OF BALTIMORE...

Preservation also benefits the future of Baltimore by telling the story of the history of the city through its physical remains, conserving its existing infrastructure and resources, and protecting its built heritage for the benefit of future generations. Preservation and environmental conservation are directly linked. Preservation reuses existing infrastructure and buildings. The reuse of existing buildings has been shown to be more cost-effective than new construction in the majority of redevelopment situations (Mason 2005, 6).

Preservation can combat sprawl and promote alternatives to new development by sustaining existing neighborhoods. Historic urban communities already meet the Maryland Smart Growth goals by having denser residential development, interwoven public services, such as public transportation and schools, and a pedestrian-friendly streetscape.

Preservation protects the past for the benefit of both the present and future of Baltimore City.

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PRESERVATION ISSUES

Baltimore City currently faces several challenges to the preservation of its historic resources. The Commission for Historical & Architectural Preservation (CHAP) must address these preservation concerns in order to effectively carry out its mission “to enhance and promote the culture and economy of Baltimore through the preservation of buildings, structures, sites and neighborhoods, that have aesthetic, historic and architectural value.” The preservation of the unique character of each historic resource is one of the main goals of CHAP. Buildings have distinctive details and materials that express the era and style of their construction. In addition, the individual character of a district or neighborhood may be defined by the topography, waterways, vegetation, views, street patterns, and landscape features.

The following document identifies the main preservation concerns based on the existing conditions of Baltimore City. Following each preservation concern is a summary of special challenges for certain types of historic resources. This document focuses on the problems facing preservation in Baltimore in order to effectively address them with future preservation policies and initiatives.

The major preservation concerns identified within Baltimore’s local historic districts are associated with:

- Major renovation work;
- New construction;
- Demolition;
- Aging materials;
- Deferred maintenance;
- Inappropriate treatments;
- Landscape maintenance;
- Loss of community.

Major Renovations

Major renovations involve substantial work on a historic building, which may involve major alterations and upgrades for new uses. Historic buildings also require upgrades in order to address outdated heating and cooling and plumbing systems, which can involve significant work. In addition, major renovations may trigger the need to address life safety, fire code, or accessibility requirements. Necessary alterations may include enclosing open stairways, installing new exit ways, and erecting new ramps and/or handrails where none existed historically.

- Major renovations of residential buildings meet different building code standards that are less strict than those that apply to public buildings. However, predominantly residential areas may be the most difficult areas to propose new uses.
- Commercial and institutional buildings must meet strict fire, safety, and accessibility codes, which require creative design decisions to retain historic fabric.
- Commercial and institutional buildings were often designed for a specific use, which may be outdated or no longer viable. Compatible and economically viable new uses must be found.
- Public parks must meet accessibility requirements, which may involve alteration of historic steps, walkways, and other features.

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New Construction

New construction in historic districts is subject to review by CHAP. Locations for new construction present opportunities for new development; however, new buildings should be designed in a manner that is sensitive to the historic neighborhood without copying the existing historic buildings.

- In neighborhoods with diverse sizes and styles of buildings, new construction will need to be assessed on a block-by-block basis. These neighborhoods have a variety of building types that require assessment of the building height, lot-to-building ratio, and architectural vocabulary on each block.
- In small-scale urban residential areas, the scale of the row houses is very important. New construction should preserve low building heights, small unit size, and spare architectural ornament.
- In neighborhoods with very similar building sizes and architectural styles, uniformity is important. These neighborhoods are characterized by the consistency of the row houses. New construction in these areas should strictly conform to existing building heights and follow the line of existing cornices and window openings.
- New construction in suburban neighborhoods should follow the existing setbacks, lot-to-building ratios, separate rear garage placement, and building massing. Architectural style is less of a concern for new construction in these areas where a wide range of styles and building materials is typical.
- In neighborhoods with an informal, village-like character, new construction should be designed to have similar setbacks, lot-to-building ratios, and building massing. The architectural style of the new building should capture key elements of the existing buildings, such as porches, roof types, and/or building materials.
- In mixed-use areas, new construction should be guided by the scale and setbacks of the surrounding neighborhood. Large-scale commercial development should be sensitive to the adjacent residential areas and have a street-friendly façade on main streets.

Demolition

The demolition of historic buildings, especially landmark or cornerstone buildings, can dramatically alter a neighborhood. Demolition can also be caused by long deferred maintenance or outright neglect, and is commonly referred to as demolition-by-neglect.

- Demolition of a significant building should only be allowed if there is a properly documented and well-demonstrated hardship.
- If allowed, demolition should not proceed until a permit has been issued for the proposed new use for the site.
- In neighborhoods with prominent cornerstone buildings, loss of a neighborhood landmark or park can lead to deterioration of the entire neighborhood.
- Commercial and institutional buildings are often the cornerstone or landmark building for the surrounding neighborhood.

Aging Materials

Every owner of an historic property must contend with the aging of historic materials. In some cases, the repair of aging materials requires specialized contractors and materials that are not available at the

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local hardware store. However, many expensive repairs can be prevented with regular maintenance. It is important that property owners and building inspectors have access to references that explain how to identify and maintain these aging materials. Examples of problematic aging materials include:

- Deterioration of stone, including flaking, discoloration, and loss of detail
- Staining and soiling of masonry, including limestone, marble, and brick
- Rot of wood elements, particularly those that are not routinely painted
- Rusting at exterior ironwork, including balconies, fences, railings, and window grilles
- Failure of roofing materials

Deferred Maintenance

Deferred maintenance can exacerbate problems with aging materials. Problems that could have been solved with regular maintenance, can develop into major damage that is costly to repair. Buildings that are abandoned are easy targets for vandalism. Deferred maintenance can cause some of the following problems:

- Leaks or dampness from poorly maintained roofs, gutters, downspouts, and site drains
- Wholesale failure of a major architectural element, such as porch, balcony, or steps
- Insect infestation because of a lack of regular pest inspections

Inappropriate Treatments

Property owners may inadvertently harm historic resources by installing repairs that are not appropriate or that directly damage existing materials. In many cases, historic materials that could have been repaired are replaced with cheap, modern materials that rapidly deteriorate. Over time, these small changes can rob an historic resource of its integrity. Examples of this type of work include:

- Replacement of original windows and doors with inappropriate modern components that significantly alter the historic facade.
- Application of inappropriate coatings, including paint, stucco, or fake stone over existing brick or stone work.
- Repointing masonry joints using damaging techniques or inappropriate new mortar and/or sealant.
- Damaging masonry by cleaning with abrasive methods or harsh chemical cleaners.
- Replacement or covering original wood siding with inappropriate replacement materials.

Landscape Maintenance

Adjacent parks, squares, and informal green spaces are integral to certain neighborhoods. In many cases, small parks and squares are included within historic district boundaries. It is important that these areas be maintained with adequate security and lighting.

- Public park maintenance is particularly important for public parks and urban residential, cornerstone neighborhoods. Local volunteers often partner with city agencies in order to maintain these green spaces. Volunteer groups should have access to reference guides and training programs that explain how to properly maintain these areas.

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Loss of Community Character

The loss of community is a serious issue for preservation. Where a neighborhood has lost its identity, security, and cohesiveness, whole neighborhoods may be abandoned. Preservation efforts will never succeed in these areas without the support of other city agencies and planning efforts. In these areas, the historic building stock may add to the neighborhoods attractions if coordinated revitalization efforts succeed.

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PRESERVATION PRINCIPLES

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIORS STANDARDS

The CHAP Design Guidelines for Historic Resources are based on the nationally accepted Secretary of the Interior *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (Standards)*, established as part of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. The *Standards* provide a philosophical framework intended to promote responsible preservation practices and are intended to help inform communities, institutions, and individuals about professional standards for historic preservation. The *Standards* were intentionally written to be broad in order that they can be applied to virtually all types of historic resources, including buildings, landscapes, roadways, structures - such as bridges, and archeological sites. The intent of the *Standards* is to assist in the long-term preservation of a building, site, or resource; they are an approach to sensible preservation planning and decision making.

The specific language of the *Standards* can be found in the United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 36 CFR (Code of Federal Regulations), Part 67. Hard copies of the document are available as publications distributed by the United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service or online at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/tax/rhb/stand.htm>.

The ten preservation principles which comprise the *Standards for Rehabilitation* are identified below. To assist users of this document in understanding the standards, they are followed by a short discussion of how the standard should be interpreted when undertaking a historic preservation project in Baltimore City.

Standard 1

A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.

Standard 1 encourages property owners and decision-makers to consider and find uses for historic sites and buildings that enhance the historic character. This standard is directly applicable to adaptive reuse projects and advises they should be carefully planned to minimize adverse impacts to the historic character of a structure or site. Destruction of character-defining features should be avoided.

Standard 2

The historic character of the property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

Standard 2 emphasizes the importance of preserving historic materials and features which define a historic property. In an effort to retain the historic character of a property, efforts should be made to repair historic features, as opposed to allowing them to be removed and replaced.

Standard 3

Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.

Standard 3 acknowledges that historic resources are really a “snapshot in time”, and therefore, discourages combining historic features from various properties or constructing new buildings that falsely read as historic. Reconstruction of lost resources, or specific features, should only be undertaken

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when detailed documentation is available and when a resource is of such significance that it warrants reconstruction.

Standard 4

Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.

Standard 4 recognizes that few buildings remain unchanged over a long period of time, and that many of these changes contribute to a resource's significance. Understanding the history of Baltimore City and its specific neighborhoods and resources, and how they have evolved, is as important as understanding the origins of a given resource.

This standard should be kept in mind when considering treatments for buildings that have undergone changes. The evolution of a resource can usually be identified and contributing changes should be retained. The changes that have occurred to the resource are an interesting way to learn more about, and communicate, the parallel changes that may have occurred in a larger community context.

Standard 5

Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.

Standard 5 recommends preserving the distinctive qualities of a property that are representative of the overall historic character, context, and integrity. When undertaking a project that impacts a building or landscape in Baltimore City, it is important to identify the distinctive features, materials, construction type, and other details that characterize the property. Every effort should be made to retain these distinctive features in their original form.

Standard 6

Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.

Standard 6 focuses on the importance of repairing features, as opposed to replacing them, to the greatest extent possible. Looking at options and opportunities for repairing a feature should always precede a decision to replace the feature. In instances where severe deterioration or a missing feature makes repair impossible, new features should match the original as closely as possible. Before an existing feature is removed for its replacement, it should be carefully documented and photographed as a reference to assist in future decision-making.

Standard 7

Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.

Standard 7 warns that harsh cleaning alternatives can severely damage historic fabrics by destroying the materials and physical properties associated with a site, and ultimately speeding the deterioration process. This standard is intended to emphasize the importance of considering cleaning alternatives, and

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choosing the cleaning means that is the gentlest one available in an effort to protect and preserve the historic fabric. Recommendations for appropriate cleaning methods are identified in these Guidelines.

Standard 8

Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.

Standard 8 addresses the importance of historic resources which exist below ground level. This is particularly important for new construction projects which may involve excavation. All new construction projects, particularly in areas of likely archeological resources, should be assessed for archeological potential. When archeological resources are identified, mitigation may be required.

Standard 9

New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

Standard 9 identifies the potential for new additions, alterations, and new construction to negatively impact historic features of a property or neighborhood character. This standard emphasizes the importance of identifying potential impacts and mitigating them before they become problematic. All new work is expected to be compatible with existing resources, though it should never replicate the existing historic resource. A person should be able to identify new work from the original.

Standard 10

New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Standard 10 stresses the importance of sensitive additions, alterations, and new construction to Baltimore's landmarks and in historic districts. Sensitive planning and design of additions, alterations, and new construction should never destroy existing historic fabric and features. This standard reiterates how smart planning can protect the historic integrity of a building, resource, or neighborhood.

Future draft will include reference to additional guidance and technical literature available.

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COMMON PRESERVATION TREATMENTS

There are four historic preservation treatments, defined in the *Standards*, which are widely accepted in the field of historic preservation today – Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration, and Reconstruction.

- **Preservation** treatments require the retention of the greatest amount of historic fabric.
- **Rehabilitation** treatments acknowledge the need to alter or add to a property to meet its needs, while still maintaining the historic character. Rehabilitation assumes that the property is more deteriorated and therefore provides more latitude with respect to retention and repair of historic features.
- **Restoration** focuses on the retention of materials from the most significant period in a property's history, while allowing the removal of materials from other periods.
- **Reconstruction** provides limited opportunities to re-create a non-surviving structure, landscape, building, or object with new materials that replicate the original, historic materials.

Preservation

Preservation is defined as the act or process of applying measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of an historic property. Work, including preliminary measures to protect and stabilize the property, generally focuses upon the ongoing maintenance and repair of historic materials and features rather than an extensive replacement and new construction. New exterior additions are not within the scope of this treatment; however, the limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems and other code-required work to make properties functional is appropriate within a preservation project (Dickenson).

Preservation stresses the protection, maintenance, and repair of historic fabric and features, and should be the baseline treatment for all historic resources in Baltimore City.

Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation is defined as the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through the repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.

Often referred to as adaptive reuse, the key to a rehabilitation project is to avoid adverse impacts to the historic fabric when expanding, modifying, or upgrading facilities. When undertaking rehabilitation projects, property owners should take care in retaining the greatest amount of historic fabric as possible. In reviewing applications, CHAP should consider the impacts to historic fabrics.

Restoration

Restoration is defined as the act or process of accurately depicting the form, features, and character of a property as it appeared at a particular period of time by means of the removal of features from other periods in its history and reconstruction of missing features from the restoration period. The limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems and other code-required work to make properties functional is appropriate within a restoration project.

When undertaking restoration projects, the extensive collection of archived historical images and documentation available through City and related organizations, should be referenced to ensure the restoration work is historically accurate.

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Reconstruction

Reconstruction is defined as the act or process of depicting, by means of new construction, the form, features, and detailing of a non-surviving site, landscape, building, structure, or object for the purpose of replicating its appearance at a specific period of time and in its historic location.

Reconstruction is not a preservation treatment that is encouraged except in extreme situations when a building or resource is of the highest level of significance. It is not anticipated that reconstruction is a preservation treatment that will be utilized within Baltimore City.

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